Precious stone inlays from the Treasury at the Achaemenid city of Persepolis, including small beards made of lapis lazuli and onyx eye stones. Excavated during the OI Persian Expedition in Iran in 1935.
Take a Closer Look! Tiny Artifacts

Magnificent monuments often come to mind when thinking about the ancient world, but archaeologists spend much of their time studying much smaller objects that tell us about the daily lives of people in the ancient world. Take a look at these mini-marvels from the OI’s collection (and take a closer look by searching for the object numbers on our database at oi-idb.uchicago.edu), then use the activity on the next page to examine something tiny in your own life!

These small rings of carnelian were likely worn as hair ornaments by an ancient Egyptian in Thebes.

This pin-shaped bronze stick was used to apply makeup.

Archaeologists must pay close attention when excavating artifacts like these tiny beads and fragments from Abydos, Egypt.

This tiny obsidian sherd could be mistaken for a regular rock, but the chipping pattern tells archaeologists that it is a stone tool.

Seal impressions from ancient times are rarely preserved—this small impression on clay has survived for almost 2500 years!

These miniature triangular tokens would have been used to keep track of trades in the Iranian site of Chogha Mish.
Archaeologists sometimes use magnifying tools like magnifying glasses or even microscopes to look closely at objects. See how your observations change when you look at something through a magnifying glass!

Find a small object (such as a bead, coin, leaf, or toy) and take a close look at it just using your eyes. What details can you see? Sketch your object as you see it below.

Now, use a magnifying glass to look closely at your object. (Tip: if you don’t have a magnifying glass, the zoom feature on many smartphones is a great substitute!) What do you see? What details can you see that you could not before? Sketch the view through your magnifying glass in the circle to the right.
Make Your Own Stamp Seal!

Stamp seals were used across the ancient world to stamp tablets, clay token balls, and pottery, and to seal containers and doors with clay. These tiny artifacts were carved with many different symbols and designs, and in a variety of styles to represent the people who used them. Take a look at these stamp seal designs from the OI (shown in black and white to make the image stand out), then use them as inspiration to create your own!

A12303 (Uruk period)

A18003 (Uruk period)

A12728 (Late Bronze Age)

A30964 (Neo-Assyrian)

A19254 (Achaemenid or later)

A6801 (Sasanian)
## You will need:
- Tealight candle
- Scissors
- Marker
- Pencil
- Bamboo skewer and/or toothpick
- Clay

## Step One: Prepare your materials
Remove the metal case and wick from the candle by carefully cutting into the metal and peeling it away from the wax. Use scissors or a butter knife to loosen the metal plate at the base of the candle, then pull the base and wick away from the candle. Trace the candle on a plain piece of paper with a marker so you have a circle the size of your candle.

## Step Two: Design your seal
Draw the design you want to appear when you stamp your seal in clay in the circle. Use a marker to trace over your design when it is finished.

## Step Three: Flip it
Your seal needs to be a mirror image of your design to work. Flip your paper over to see how the design needs to be carved on your candle. You can trace over it to make it easier to see.

## Step Four: Carving
Carve the flipped image of your design into the candle with the skewer or toothpick. Be sure to carve lines deep and wide enough to make an imprint in clay.

## Step Five: Test and finish
Press your seal into a piece of wet clay to see your design. Make any changes you want. When you are finished with your seal, create the final impression by stamping it into a lump of clay.